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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5856  
INFO SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 GABORONE 005265

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TAGS: [SADC](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MCAP](#) [ZU](#)

SUBJECT: BREAKTHROUGH FOR SADC ON REFORMING POLITICAL ORGAN?

REF: (A) GABORONE 2630, (B) PRETORIA 6497, (C) MBABANE 1670

(U) CLASSIFIED BY POL/ECON CHIEF MICHAEL MORROW, REASON 1.5 (B) AND (D).

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (C) SADC FOREIGN AND DEFENSE MINISTERS HAVE REACHED CONSENSUS ON REFORMING THE LONG-MORIBUND SADC ORGAN ON POLITICS, DEFENSE AND SECURITY, FM MERAFHE TOLD US. THE ORGAN HAS BEEN LARGELY DYSFUNCTIONAL SINCE ITS CREATION IN 1996, DUE TO A DISPUTE OVER LINES OF AUTHORITY BETWEEN IT AND SADC PROPER THAT PITTED ORGAN CHAIRMAN ROBERT MUGABE AGAINST 1996-99 SADC CHAIRMAN NELSON MANDELA. ACCORDING TO MERAFHE, THE SADC FOREIGNQ MINISTERS MET IN HARARE NOVEMBER 23 AND AGREED ON A REFORM PLAN THAT CLEARLY SUBORDINATES THE ORGAN TO THE SADC CHAIRMAN AND ESTABLISHES A TROIKA CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE ORGAN. THIS AGREEMENT WAS ACHIEVED ONLY AFTER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE WAS PUT ON ZIMBABWE, WHICH HAD LONG OPPOSED THE REFORM PLAN, MERAFHE SAID. SADC HEADS OF STATE MUST NOW RATIFY THE PLAN, WHICH MERAFHE EXPECTS TO HAPPEN AT AN EXTRAORDINARY SUMMIT WITHIN THE NEXT SIX MONTHS. THIS REFORM, IF RATIFIED, WOULD BE A CLEAR STEP FORWARD IN SADC'S EFFORTS TO DEVELOP A SOUND REGIONAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE. HOWEVER, THE ULTIMATE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ORGAN WILL LARGELY DEPEND ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH SADC'S DIVERSE MEMBERS CAN DEVELOP A COMMON SET OF VALUES IN THEIR APPROACH TO CONFLICT MANAGEMENT. END SUMMARY.

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SADC MINISTERS AGREE TO REFORM POLITICAL/SECURITY ORGAN  
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¶2. (C) FOREIGN MINISTER MERAFHE TOLD AMBASSADOR NOVEMBER 24 THAT AN IMPORTANT NEW DEVELOPMENT HAD OCCURRED DURING HIS MEETING THE DAY BEFORE WITH A GROUPING OF OTHER SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC) FOREIGN AND DEFENSE MINISTERS IN HARARE. THE MINISTERS PRESENT (FROM AT LEAST 10 OF THE 14 MEMBER STATES -- MAURITIUS, ZAMBIA, SEYCHELLES, AND POSSIBLY DRC WERE NOT PRESENT) REACHED CONSENSUS ON A PLAN FOR REFORMING THE STRUCTURE OF SADC'S ORGAN FOR POLITICS, DEFENSE AND SECURITY. THE PLAN FOLLOWED THE OUTLINE OF THE AGREEMENT REACHED BY SADC FOREIGN AND DEFENSE MINISTERS IN MBABANE IN OCTOBER 1999: THAT THE ORGAN IS INDEED A PART OF SADC AND SHOULD REPORT TO THE SADC CHAIRMAN; AND THAT THE ORGAN'S CHAIRMANSHIP (HELD BY MUGABE SINCE THE ORGAN'S CREATION IN 1996) SHOULD BE TRANSFORMED INTO AN ANNUALLY ROTATING TROIKA. (COMMENT: ZIMBABWE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD SIGNED ON TO THE MBABANE COMMUNIQUE, BUT SUBSEQUENT BACKSLIDING THREW THE ORGAN REFORM ISSUE INTO QUESTION. SEE REFTELS. END COMMENT).

¶3. (C) THE HARARE CONSENSUS, PROVIDED IT HOLDS, WOULD OPEN THE DOOR TO CLEARING UP A PROBLEM THAT HAS BEDEVILED SADC FOR FOUR YEARS. SINCE ITS INCEPTION, THE ORGAN HAS HAD A DYSFUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH SADC ITSELF. THE CRUX OF THE MATTER HAS BEEN SHARP DISAGREEMENT OVER WHETHER THE ORGAN SHOULD BE SUBORDINATE TO THE SADC CHAIRMAN OR AUTONOMOUS FROM IT. THIS DISPUTE LARGELY PITTED ORGAN CHAIRMAN ROBERT MUGABE

AGAINST NELSON MANDELA, WHO HELD THE SADC CHAIRMANSHIP FROM 1996-99. THE MOST WELL KNOWN CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE ORGAN WAS THE UNRESOLVED DEBATE OVER WHETHER THE ORGAN (OR FOR THAT MATTER, SADC ITSELF) EVER FORMALLY ENDORSED THE DEPLOYMENT OF ZIMBABWEAN, NAMIBIAN AND ANGOLAN TROOPS (THE SO-CALLED "SADC FORCES") TO THE DRC IN AUGUST 1998.

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TWISTING HARARE'S ARM  
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14. (C) MERAFHE SINGLED OUT ZIMBABWE AS THE MAIN STUMBLING BLOCK AT THE HARARE MINISTERIAL. HE SAID ZIMBABWE WAS RELUCTANT TO GO ALONG WITH THE REFORM PLAN UNTIL HE, ALONG WITH SOUTH AFRICAN FM ZUMA, "HAMMERED" AWAY AT ZIMBABWEAN FM MUDENGE UNTIL "HE WAS DISABUSED OF HIS NOTIONS." MERAFHE (PROTECT) FURTHER NOTED THAT HE, ALONG WITH THE OTHER MINISTERS WHO WERE PRESENT, ARE NOW "QUIETLY CELEBRATING" ZIMBABWE'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE STRUCTURAL CHANGE.

15. (C) ACCORDING TO MERAFHE, THE SADC HEADS OF STATE MUST NOW RATIFY THE PLAN BEFORE IT BECOMES OPERABLE. HE ANTICIPATES THIS WILL HAPPEN AT AN EXTRAORDINARY SUMMIT WITHIN THE NEXT SIX MONTHS. ASKED BY THE AMBASSADOR ABOUT THE CHANCES OF FURTHER BACKSLIDING AT THE HEAD OF STATE LEVEL, MERAFHE REPLIED THAT IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT -- AND DOWNRIGHT EMBARRASSING -- FOR ZIMBABWE OR ANY OTHER MEMBER STATE TO BREAK RANKS AT THIS POINT.

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SADC CONSENSUS ON ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING, TOO?  
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16. (C) WE ASKED MERAFHE ABOUT THE "OTHER HALF" OF SADC'S RESTRUCTURING EFFORT -- A REVIEW THAT BEGAN 15 MONTHS AGO OF SADC'S HIGHLY DECENTRALIZED (AND WIDELY CRITICIZED) SYSTEM OF 21 SECTOR COORDINATING UNITS, EACH (WITH TWO EXCEPTIONS) FUNDED AND STAFFED BY A SINGLE MEMBER STATE. HE REPORTED THAT THE ISSUE WOULD BE DISCUSSED BY THE SADC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS (OF WHICH MERAFHE IS A MEMBER) AT THEIR NOVEMBER 28 MEETING IN GABORONE, AND THAT HE EXPECTED A FAVORABLE AND NON-CONTROVERSIAL OUTCOME. (COMMENT: THIS TRACKS WITH WHAT WE ARE HEARING FROM A VARIETY OF OTHER SOURCES: THAT AFTER 15 MONTHS OF STUDY AND NEGOTIATIONS, SADC HAS REACHED A CONSENSUS TO CONSOLIDATE THE 21 SECTOR UNITS INTO 4 "CLUSTERS" -- TRADE/FINANCE/INVESTMENT; INFRASTRUCTURE; AGRICULTURE/ENVIRONMENT; AND HUMAN RESOURCES -- THAT WOULD BE REGIONALLY FUNDED AND REGIONALLY STAFFED. END COMMENT).

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COMMENT  
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17. (C) SHOULD THE CONSENSUS REACHED IN HARARE STICK, THIS CAN ONLY BE SEEN AS A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT FOR SADC. HAVING A FUNCTIONING ORGAN WOULD GIVE SADC A MUCH-NEEDED MECHANISM FOR ADDRESSING REGIONAL SECURITY ISSUES, AS WELL AS GIVE THE U.S. AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS A POINT OF CONTACT THROUGH WHICH TO ENGAGE SADC ON SUCH ISSUES. AT THE SAME TIME, AT THIS POINT IT WOULD NOT BE PRUDENT AUTOMATICALLY TO ASSUME SADC WILL ACTUALLY APPROVE THESE REFORMS -- PRESIDENT MUGABE COULD STILL BLOCK THEM IF HE SO CHOOSES. NOR WOULD IT BE PRUDENT TO OVERSELL THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF A REFORMED ORGAN. MANY OBSERVERS POINT TO THE STARK DISPARITIES AMONG THE 14 SADC COUNTRIES REGARDING THEIR LEVEL OF POLITICAL MATURITY AND COMMITMENT TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY. UNLESS AND UNTIL THE REGION DEVELOPS A GREATER DEGREE OF SHARED COMMITMENT TO THESE VALUES, THE ULTIMATE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ORGAN AS A VEHICLE FOR DIPLOMATIC, NON-MILITARY APPROACHES TO REGIONAL SECURITY ISSUES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA WILL REMAIN IN QUESTION. NONETHELESS, THE HARARE CONSENSUS IS A PREREQUISITE FOR SADC TO GET TO THAT POINT. THIS, COUPLED WITH THE

ENCOURAGING NEWS SUGGESTING AGREEMENT ON CONSOLIDATING  
SADC'S FAR-FLUNG AND GENERALLY WEAK DEVELOPMENTAL  
STRUCTURES, APPEARS TO BODE WELL FOR SADC'S LONG-TERM  
ASPIRATIONS TO BECOME A STRONGER ENGINE FOR REGIONAL  
INTEGRATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.

LANGE